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India and Pakistan: Two Years After Tashkent

Special Report

WEEKLY REVIEW

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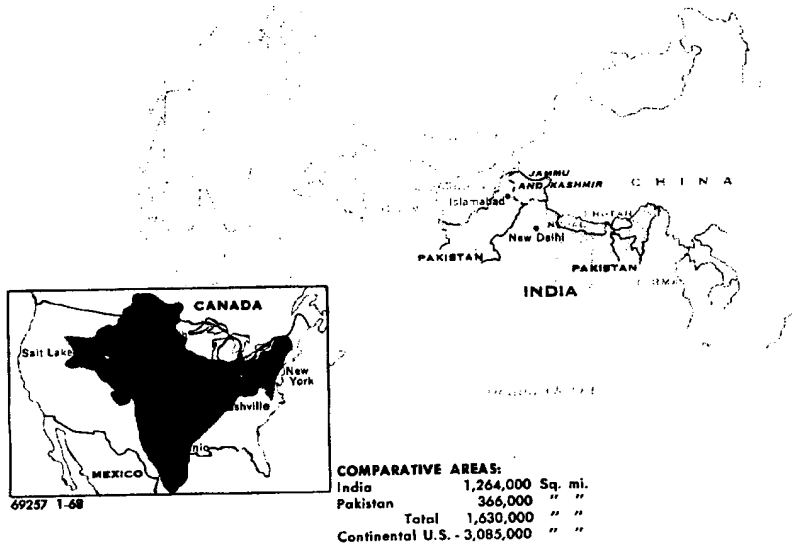
INDIA AND PAKISTAN: TWO YEARS AFTER TASHKENT

When a UN resolution brought an end to the war of September 1965, India and Pakistan each occupied parts of the other's territory, and trade, communications, and diplomatic relations had all been disrupted. Each side insisted that the other make the first move toward withdrawing from strategic positions, and the stalemate continued throughout the rest of 1965. Finally, under the auspices of the USSR, President Ayub and Prime Minister Shastri agreed at Tashkent to a series of measures designed to begin the process of restoring normal relations. In the two years since, there has been a slight and gradual improvement, delayed and complicated by the problem of Kashmir.

INDIA AND PAKISTAN



COMPARATIVE AREAS:

India	1,264,000	Sq. mi.
Pakistan	366,000	" "
Total	1,630,000	" "
Continental U.S. -	3,085,000	" "

The "Spirit of Tashkent"

The most important measures agreed upon at Tashkent were: troop withdrawals to positions held prior to infiltration by the Pakistani forces; repatriation of prisoners; return of the high commissioners (ambassadors) to their posts; discouragement of propaganda; consideration of means to restore economic, trade, and cultural relations and communications; discussion of the return of property and assets; and the continuation of meetings at all levels on matters of direct concern to both countries.

Both parties quickly implemented the more immediate provisions: troop withdrawal, repatriation of prisoners, and resumption of correct diplomatic relations. The ban on propaganda did not last long, however, and the "Spirit of Tashkent" suffered a severe blow at the first post-war Indo-Pakistani ministerial meeting in March 1966 when the Pakistanis refused to study lesser issues unless the Indians concurrently showed some flexibility in the long-standing and emotionally charged dispute over Kashmir. The Indians replied that popular emotions in India at the time prohibited any concessions on Kashmir, and that minor problems should be resolved so as to provide a more favorable climate.

In the end, all the two could agree on was that further discussion of specific matters should be handled on the diplomatic level by the high commissioners. Although there has since been some agreement on minor points, meaningful improvement has been delayed by a preoccupation with the dominating Kashmir issue.

The Importance of the Kashmir Dispute

India has steadfastly held to its position affirming the legality of the 1947 accession of Jammu and Kashmir by its Hindu maharaja. Since 1956, New Delhi also has maintained that it no longer considers itself bound to conduct a plebiscite in Kashmir, despite the UN resolutions calling for such a vote, because the demilitarization of Kashmir--another element of the resolutions--has never taken place. Moreover, the Indians point out that four "free" elections have been held in Kashmir, thus providing the Kashmiris with ample occasion to express their will. Actually, strong-arm tactics and legal maneuvering governed the outcome of all four elections.

Buttressing these legalistic points is the fact that ever since the 1949 cease-fire, India has held the lion's share of Kashmir, including the sought-after Vale, and has had the military muscle to maintain possession. Over the years, India gradually proceeded to integrate its portion of Kashmir into the Indian union and also provided

the state with considerable financial assistance.

Some of New Delhi's arguments on Kashmir are rooted in the Gandhian ideology that has long shaped the Congress Party's concept of the Indian union. According to this view, independent India was to be a secular state whose strength would be derived from the cooperative efforts of a vast array of different religious and ethnic groups. To many, agreement to the partitioning of the subcontinent was an unfortunate departure from this ideal, and to allow a further secession from the union on the basis of religion would imperil national integrity. This argument is especially strong in north India, the region from which most of the Congress leadership is drawn.

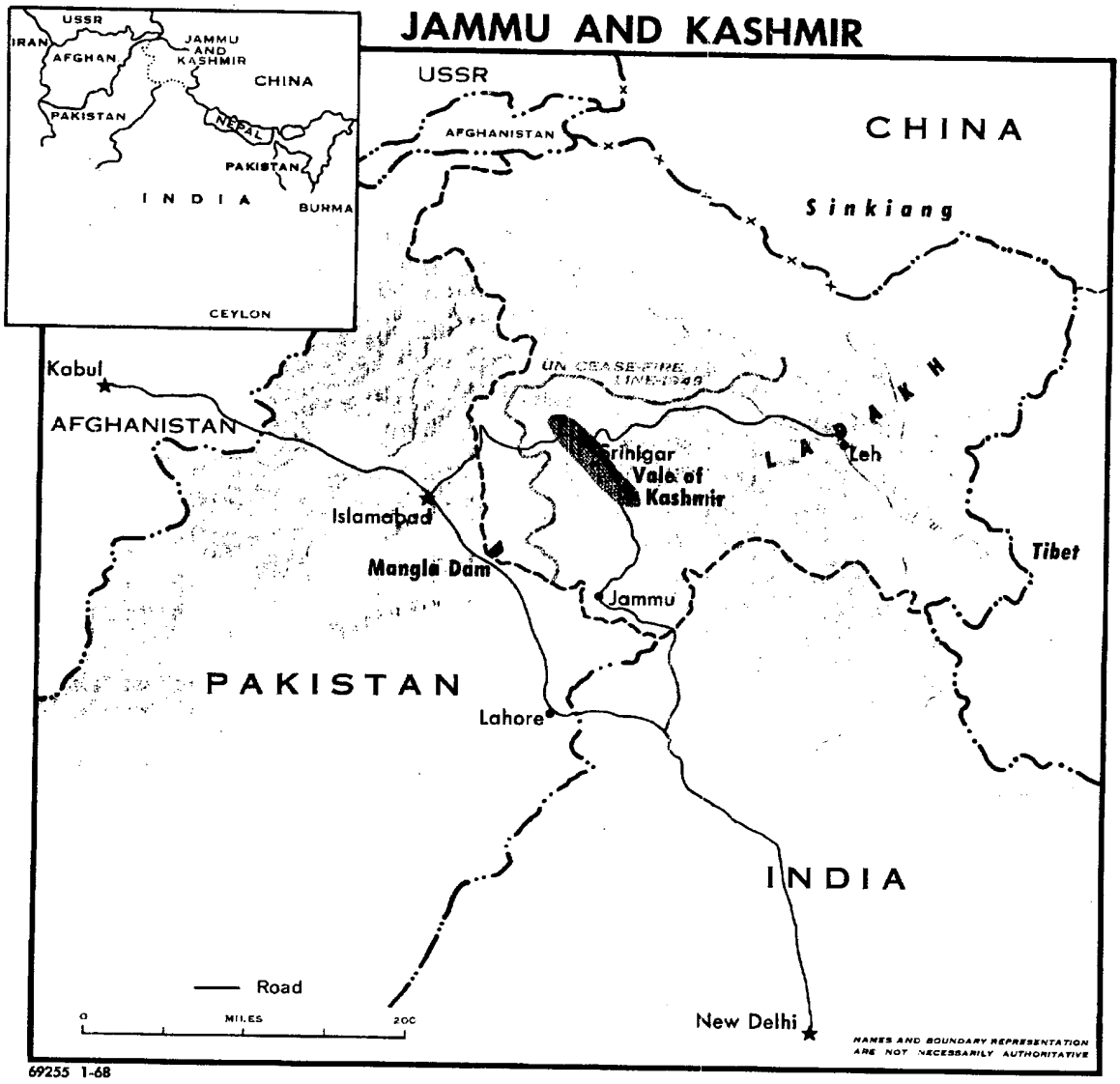
After 1962, India added another argument, this one based on its military strategy relative to China. India needs the Jammu-Srinagar-Leh road, running through the heart of the Vale of Kashmir, to supply a division of troops standing guard in the Ladakh area of Kashmir, an area important for Indian defense against the Chinese in Tibet and Sinkiang.

Domestic political considerations lie behind all of these arguments. Nationalist sentiment in India opposes any settlement that would involve compromising on the present situation. Congress Party rulers, whose parliamentary majority was sharply reduced in last year's elections, are well aware that too many concessions to Pakistan could bring the downfall of their rule. This is all the more true because of the recent gains registered by such nationalistic parties as the Jan Sangh.

Although India rejects a plebiscite or outright independence for Kashmir, it probably would be willing to accept a settlement that involved some minor adjustments to the 1949 cease-fire line, which would then become the international boundary between India and Pakistan. Such a settlement would hardly satisfy Pakistan, however, inasmuch as India would still hold the Vale.

Pakistan's position from the beginning has been based primarily on extending to Kashmir the principal of religious separation that was responsible for the original partition of India. Pakistan itself had been created in order to allow Muslims to live in their own country, free from repression and discrimination at the hands of a Hindu majority. Therefore, they argue, the people of Kashmir, who are predominately Muslim, should have the opportunity to incorporate their land into Pakistan if they wish, an opportunity denied them by the Hindu maharaja's accession to India in 1947.

Pakistan's argument is not altogether altruistic. If so predominately a Muslim area as Kashmir were to remain in the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JAMMU AND KASHMIR
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NAMES AND BOUNDARY REPRESENTATION ARE NOT NECESSARILY AUTHORITATIVE
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Indian Union, the principle behind the original partition of India would be undermined. Consequently, Pakistan's right to exist might become even more questionable in the minds of some Indians. Furthermore, many Pakistanis maintain that Kashmir is economically a logical extension of West Pakistan. The headwaters of many of the rivers vital to West Pakistan's agriculture are in Kashmir, and the easiest trade route from Srinagar leads into Pakistan. Political motivations are also at work. No government in Pakistan could entirely abandon a strong stand on Kashmir and survive, any more than could the Congress Party in India.

Recent Developments on The Kashmir Problem

Despite the adamant attitudes that have had 20 years to harden, and which the Tashkent accords did nothing to alleviate, changing circumstances may make some alteration in Kashmir's status inevitable. India seems to be faced with growing unrest in the Vale. The young people there are becoming frustrated and disillusioned with the inability of their elders to acquire freedom for the Kashmiris. This new generation is not as responsive as was the previous one to appeals to secularism and could provide a seedbed for growing communal disorder. The present Sadiq government, discredited by fraudulent elections, is widely regarded as weak and ineffective. If the unrest continues, New Delhi may have to decide between harsh repression and greater autonomy.

Kashmir developments will also be affected by the release on 2 January of Sheik Abdullah, perhaps the most influential Kashmiri political figure, from 14 years of almost continual imprisonment. The shiek will probably return to his native state, and the Gandhi government appears to be taking a calculated risk that his presence there will not further inflame local sentiment. New Delhi may hope that Abdullah, a relative moderate among Kashmiri nationalists, will win support away from more extremist leaders who are pressing a separatist line. The sheik himself has indicated that he will attempt to resume his dialogues with the Indian and Pakistani heads of government--interrupted by his rearrest in 1965--in an effort to find a solution equally acceptable to "India, Pakistan, Kashmir, everybody."

Pakistan may also be moderating its position somewhat. In the spring of 1967 there were indications from Lahore that public animosity against India, which became intense during and after the 1965 warfare, was subsiding and that interest in Kashmir was declining. The view from Lahore was that the economic reasons for wanting Kashmir were no longer as important as they

had been. The completion of the Mangal dam for example, had decreased the importance of Kashmir's headwaters for West Pakistan's agriculture. The Mangal dam had also demonstrated that the Indus Basin Agreement of 1960, an irrigation scheme dividing the rivers from the Indus to the Sutlej watersheds between India and Pakistan, can provide West Pakistan's water needs. In retrospect, moreover, many Lahoris were disillusioned with the failure of the Kashmiris to rise up against India in 1965. Instead of demanding a plebiscite, many Pakistanis in the Lahore area began to believe last spring that partition or a special status for the Vale would be sufficient. Although this attitude may be held by only a few West Pakistanis, Lahore is an important cultural center for West Pakistan, and it is possible that a more moderate attitude may in time appear elsewhere in West Pakistan. Furthermore, the entire issue of Kashmir has never been at all popular in East Pakistan, which contains the greater portion of the country's population.

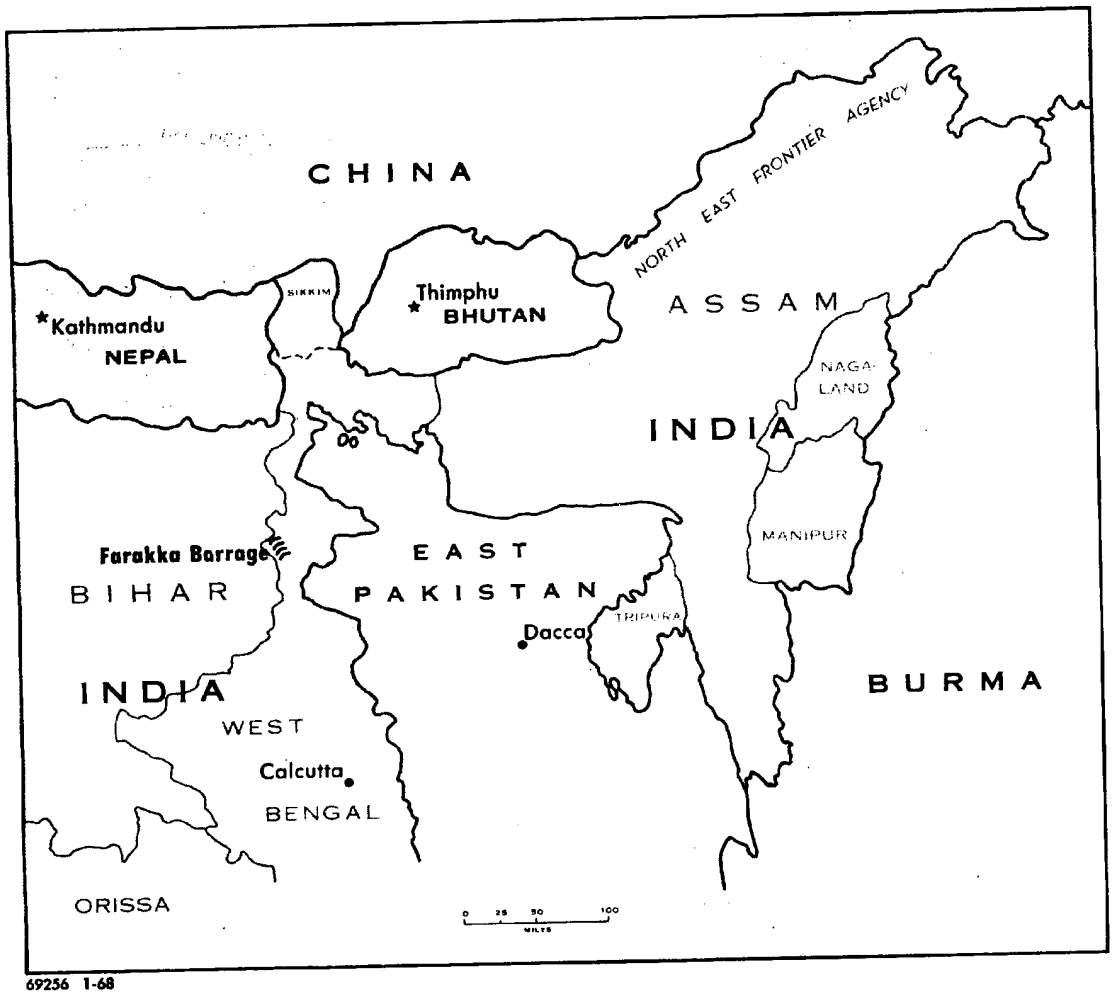
President Ayub Khan has also taken a less intransigent position on Kashmir that may reflect the changing attitudes noted in Lahore. Although Ayub said in his regular monthly broadcast in early September that there had been no "improvement" from India, and that the Kashmiris were still subjected to great atrocities, his wording was generally not inflammatory. References to relations with India filled only about one tenth of the speech.

Of much greater significance than this speech was Ayub's visit to Moscow at the end of September. It is certain that Ayub hoped to secure Soviet military aid, effect a diminution of Soviet military supplies to India, and win a promise of Soviet pressure on the Indians to be more accommodating on the Kashmir question. He apparently failed on all three counts. The joint communiqué issued at the end of the visit did not even mention Kashmir specifically, and there was no agreed formula for a solution to Indo-Pakistani disputes.

After his unsuccessful gambit in Moscow, Ayub reportedly mentioned to close aides that it was obvious that there was no "great power" that would force India to any compromise on Kashmir, and that the Pakistanis must become more realistic. He added that the Soviet leaders had advised Pakistan to try to settle its differences with India by direct peaceful negotiations, and that they could not count on the Soviet Union to press India.

Progress on Lesser Issues

In the few months following Ayub's visit to Moscow, a more conciliatory Pakistani position toward India did emerge. Pakistani protest notes on communal disorders in India softened in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tone. Increased personal contacts between representatives of the two countries are reportedly in the offing. Rawalpindi is said to be reviewing the subject of negotiations for resumption of air services between the two countries and of transit trade from India to Afghanistan over Pakistani surface routes.

If agreements could be made regarding air service and transit trade, they would add to the modest list of agreements made on minor points since Tashkent, both in commercial and military matters.

Commercial airlines of each nation resumed overflights of the other's territory in early 1966. In August 1967, officials from East Pakistan and from India's Assam State agreed to resume demarcation of the India - East Pakistan borders. Telecommunications links, which had been only partially restored after Tashkent, were fully restored in October 1967.

Some important commercial poblems remain to be solved, especially the restoration of trade. Although India removed its prohibition on trade with Pakistan in May 1966, Pakistan has refused to trade directly. Pakistan still does not allow India to export by road directly to Afghanistan, although the Afghans are allowed to transit their exports--mainly fruit--to India. India does receive Pakistani jute through third countries.

The Indus Waters Commission met few problems after the 1965 war, but a new problem has arisen over the waters flowing through India and East Pakistan. India is building a low dam at Farakka on the Ganges just above the East Pakistan border. The Farakka Barrage is designed to divert part of the flow of the Ganges into the Hooghly River, a tributary flowing south past Calcutta to the Bay of Bengal. The aim is to flush out the silting Calcutta harbor and to reduce the high salinity of the Hooghly, a prime source of Calcutta's water supply.

Pakistan long maintained that the barrage would prevent much water from reaching the lower arms of the Ganges in East Pakistan during the fall dry season and thus would endanger rice and jute crops. Moreover, it would be impossible for East Pakistan to develop its resources in accordance with plans drawn up at the request of Pakistan by the American-based International Engineering Company. About 13 million East Pakistanis and four million acres of East Pakistan land would be adversely affected, the Pakistanis claimed in 1966.

Discussions about the dam took place before the 1965 war, after which the issue lay relatively dormant. Recently, both sides have shown an interest in settling the dispute and now seem willing to engage the services of a third party to help work out a solution. The Harvard Center for Population Studies, which has shown an interest in the matter,

or some similar institution might well provide the catalyst needed to break the deadlock. Although the atmosphere seems to have improved recently for a settlement of the Ganges River problem, a protracted period of study and negotiation will probably be required before any agreement is reached. If the Pakistanis cannot achieve what they consider an acceptable settlement, they may take the issue to the UN.

The Military Situation

As in commercial relations, there has been some progress on the military scene, although serious problems remain. In September 1966 the commanders of the Indian and Pakistani armies met to discuss measures to prevent border incidents from becoming major issues. They arranged for a "hot line" to be established between their army commands, and agreed to give each other prior notification of troop movements along the border. In October 1967 the fourth such meeting took place between Pakistani Commander in Chief Yahya Khan and Indian Army chief Kumaramangalam. Each reported that the talks were pleasant and satisfactory, although it seems they merely reaffirmed previous agreements. In general, the military authorities of the two countries, many of whom served together in the British Indian Army prior to 1947, have found it easier to deal with each other than have their civilian counterparts.

Rapport among Westernized senior officers cannot alone solve all the military-related problems, however. One such problem is the continuing Indian claim that the Pakistanis are training and arming the rebellious Naga and Mizo tribes of eastern India. There is no firm evidence that the Pakistanis are actually aiding the tribesmen in any substantial manner at the present time, although they did help them in the early 1960s. The suspicion created by the charges will probably continue to cause strains between the two countries.

A much more serious military problem is the arms race between the two nations. India continues with its plan to modernize and strengthen its armed forces, on the grounds that it must contend not only with Pakistan but also with China. Pakistan, in turn, has been determined to keep pace by improving the ratio of Pakistani to Indian ground forces and by increasing its inventory of tanks and airplanes.

Although each country, at the prodding of the US, reduced its military budget for the 1968 fiscal year, these reductions were slight. If they are to be meaningful, the reductions must be repeated in the years to come. So far, such reductions have not signaled an end to the arms race on the subcontinent, which will probably go on--at least to some degree--as long as the animosities between India and Pakistan continue.

Despite this race, it is highly unlikely that either side is actually contemplating war with the other, although each accuses the other of nefarious intentions. Pakistan appears to have learned a lesson in 1965, and will not be eager soon to start a serious conflict. India, reasonably satisfied with the status quo, has no reason to resume hostilities against its smaller neighbor, especially since military action would only draw the Chinese and the Pakistanis closer together.

Prospects

There has been a definite though slight improvement in relations between India and Pakistan in recent months. Despite gradual progress on minor issues, however, it would be too optimistic to hope for a dramatic breakthrough in the foreseeable future. Relations between the two countries remain delicate, and seemingly minor issues can cause setbacks.

On 6 January, for example, Pakistan expelled an Indian diplomat assigned to Dacca, accusing him of complicity with a small group of East Pakistani separatists who had been arrested for allegedly plotting against the government. New Delhi immediately retaliated by evicting a Pakistani Embassy counselor. The bitterness and hostile press play that ensued soon subsided, but the incident pointed up the sensitivity of each side to real or imagined affronts by the other.

Nevertheless, the over-all trend toward improvement seems likely to continue. Pakistani officials appear willing to move ahead with efforts to clear away lesser problems even though the Kashmir dispute remains unresolved. On the Kashmir issue itself, President Ayub has made some public remarks recently which, although obscure, seem to signify an encouraging moderation of his stand. In late November, he urged the settling of the Kashmir dispute in the light of UN resolutions or through any other established channels of justice. In a magazine article in mid-December, he said that Pakistan was willing to accept mediation from any quarter on Kashmir provided it is just, impartial, and honorable. He may have had in mind a body similar to the Rann of Kutch Tribunal, whose decision is expected soon on a territorial dispute with India that led to armed clashes in early 1965.

Mrs. Gandhi seems to be aware of a change in Pakistani attitudes. In recent press conferences after Abdullah's release, she stated that she had no objection to taking the initiative for a summit meeting with Ayub, and thought that some recent Pakistani statements had been more hopeful than before. It is therefore possible that the coming year could see renewed discussion concerning Kashmir, along with talks on other matters. An ultimate solution, however, is still a long way off. ~~(SECRET NO FOREIGN DISSEM)~~